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ORIENTALIA

BUILDING AND BUILDERS IN ḤADRAMAWT

(SACRIFICIAL RITES AND TRADE GUILDS) *

114 This article does not attempt to be comprehensive in scope, for the art of building in South Arabia has been developed to a high level, and merits a lengthy study. Of recent years Ḥaḍramī architecture has been made known to Europe by the photographic studies of various travellers, but detailed architectural studies remain to be achieved. Carlo von Landberg has described the method of constructing a house in his usual admirable fashion, basing it on oral report in colloquial Arabic, but he has not concerned himself with the actual builders themselves, their social organisation, and the ritual which forms part and parcel of the process of building. These are the aspects of the craft with which I am concerned here, and I have included a number of architectural terms, culled from my field-books. Most of those words were noted in Tarīm where the architectural manner has been much influenced by Indonesian styles, but it is in the Wādī Daw'an and Šibām where one will find more truly native elements in the architecture. The adobe construction of the Wādīs again differs from the stone construction of the Djōla, and both contrast to some extent with buildings in the West Aden Protectorate.

* Bibliography. — Ingrams, W. H., *Housebuilding in the Hadhramaut*, *Geog. Journal* (London, April, 1935), lxxxv/4, p. 370-2, illus.; Lancaster, Osbert, *The culture of the Hadramaut and the spread of European barbarism*, *Architectural Review* (London, Sept., 1936), lxxx, no. 478, p. 95-100 (an architect's appreciation of Ḥaḍramī architecture as shown in Freya Stark's photographs); von Landberg, C., *Études sur les Dialectes de l'Arabie Méridionale*, I, *Ḥaḍramoût* (Leiden, 1901), p. 194-403); Pillet, Maurice, *Les Grattes-ciel Orientaux*, *Urbanisme* (Paris, Nov.-Déc., 1937), VI, no 38, p. 232-47; Van der Berg, L. W. C., *Le Ḥadhramout et les Colonies Arabes dans l'Archipel Indien* (Batavia, 1886) (drawings of Ḥaḍrami forts); Van der Meulen, D., *Women en bouwen in Zuid-Arabië*, *Natuur en Techniek* (July, 1949).

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In Ṭarīm many houses belonging to the wealthy saiyids seem to have a name chosen by the owner, and Saiyid 'Umar b. Šaiḫ Āl Kāf, our neighbour in Tarīm, called his house al-'Iššah, or 'the nest', but others seem to be called after the name ot the locality, or as the Ḥaḍramī says, after the name of the well, such as the house Ḥamṭūṭ, our neighbour to the east. Houses in Tarīm often have chronograms over the door, generally some pious phrase, worked in the plaster and painted. In Šibām the Maṣna'ah or fort has inscriptions, including dates, in the woodwork. I am convinced that herein lies the explanation of why so very few pre-Islamic and early Islamic inscriptions have been found in Ḥaḍramawt. On dams, on buildings, even in the mosques, the inscriptions which today record the foundation, or repairs effected to a construction, are all drawn in the plaster. The only two Kufic inscriptions I saw in Ḥaḍramawt were on the grave-stones at Ḳabr Nabī Allāh Hūd, and the strange shrine of Mawlā Maṭar. Pre-Islamic stone inscriptions will of course be discovered when excavation is made in the mud mounds which represent the ancient towns and villages of the country.

The sacrificial rites described here are probably general to South-West Arabia. (In the Ṣubaiḥī village of Am-Fadjarah, west of Aden I came across very similar practices. A ewe (ganamah) was slaughtered at the foundation (aās). In the space under the stairs called ḳuṭb, when it was made, another was slaughtered, and on completion of the building a third ewe, called the iklīl or 'crown', was also immolated. As the occupier of the house in question I was asked to defray the cost of these. This is some hundreds of miles from Ḥaḍramawt.) Comparisons with ritual in the ancient world may be made by scholars.

According to my early notes in Tarīm, every craft seems to have different categories of workmen, perhaps graded, but I did not explore this possibility. A fully trained craftsman is called a mu'allim, and if you want to have a house built, you go to the mu'allim. Tarīm once had fifty to sixty mu'allims, but now (1947) there are probably only about thirty. Other categories are, the musawwis who builds the dry stone foundation of your house, and the bānī who builds with the clay bricks (madar) and clay (ṭīn). A bānī in Ḥaḍramawt is also a potter (syn. in Yemen, maddār). I heard of an architect in Tarīm who bore the name 'Umar Ya'mur

which is interesting, because the name for a builder in other parts of South-West Arabia is 'ammār (verb, 'ammar yi'ammir).

When you start to put the first clay brick (madrah) on the stone foundation of your house, you slaughter a sheep or two, or more if you are a rich man. You invite one of the ṣāliḥīn (pious) such as a sayid or mansab to lay the first madrah; a ceremony is made out of the entire proceeding, and an entertainment given known as the ḍiyāfah of the laying of the brick (ṭarḥ al-madrah). A sheep is slaughtered on one of the corners (ḳaḍm pl. ḥiḳam), probably the first to be completed. You then take the sheep's head and lay it on each corner for about a minute or so, in order that the blood may be scattered on each corner. This is done to stop the Djinn from entering the house. Sometimes, if you are slaughtering two head of sheep, you kill on one ḳaḍm and anoint a second, then you kill again, and blood the remaining two. If it is a large house like al-Manṣaḥrah, the Āl Yaḥyā house in which we were living, one may slaughter eight to ten sheep. A photograph of the sīs of a house building in Duw'an stained with the blood of a sacrifice is shown by Ingrams[1].

As the sheep is slaughtered, one of the ḥaddāmīn (i.e. the workers on the building) gets on top of the foundation (sīs) and hallocs (yihawwil), and all the other other ḥaddāmīn do the same. (This hallooing is also performed when the rain-flood is coming down the Wādī, and by the Bedouin on the Djōls when rain comes.) They then repeat a number of formulae for good luck, such as the following: —

> Ṣalāt 'alā Muḥammad — wa-ṭawwil 'umr fulān bin fulān — Allāh yu'ṭīh min 'aṭā' — wa-yrazzaḳah māl wa-'ayāl, etc.
>
> Bless Muḥammad — and make long the life of so and so (the master of the house) — God give him sustenance — and provide him with money and off-spring.

The sheep's carcase is then taken to a house and divided, one quarter goes to the owner of the house which is being built, one fifth of the remainder goes to the Dawlah (Sultan), two fifths go to Ahl al-Sīs, i.e. the builders of the foundations who in

[1] See art. noted in the bibliography.

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Tarim are the Ahl Bā Ḥurāil, also the Tarim grave-diggers [2], and two fifths to the other Saddāmin. The owner of the house customarily gives some of his portion away, but my informant did not remember exactly how much this is, or to whom it is given. Apart from the foundation sacrifice, the owner will also make a separate ḍiyāfah or entertainment in his own house, killing a sheep or two there.

When you have finished setting in position the beams which act as lintels to the windows, exits, cupboards, etc., on the ground floor, and which are known as taisīrah (pl. tayāsīr) or mafsīr), a sheep is usually slaughtered on the corner tayāsīr. The feast given at this point is known as Ġadā al-Tayāsīr [3]. The blood lies on the tayāsīr, and the Ǧinn drink. Being grateful to the lord of the house, they leave him alone, and protect him from the other Ǧinn [4]. If however you should happen to be a poor man, you may not be able to afford to slaughter an animal on this occasion, but you give the workmen a meal. At least, in the past you gave the workmen a meal, but as they brought their children etc., with them, you used to find yourself giving thirty a meal, instead of ten or twelve. So this practice has now ceased, and a bargain is made that the men get food in kind, and money to buy meat, instead of having a meal provided for them.

At the placing of the cross-beams on top of the wooden or stone columns (tarkīb isbum, or ta'kīd isbum), the master of the new house provides a ḍiyāfah known as Ġadā Tarkīb Isbum, and also

[2] Cf. my article in *Le Muséon*, 62 (1949), p. 158.

[3] Ġadā is used in the Wādī Ḥaḍramawt and Wāḥidī territory to denote food provided in kind for an employee as part of his contract.

[4] I have a pamphlet by 'Abd al-Ḳādir b. Muḥ. al-Ḥibšī of Ḥaibān where it was given me, entitled Ṭuḥfa «Singapore» (Singapore, 1351 H.) which mentions slaughtering an ('aḳīḳ) the feet of the bride and groom at the Lailat al-Ḥaflā when the bride comes to her husband's house. Those who cannot buy a beast to sacrifice (ǧabīḥah) break eggs at their feet, a custom common enough in Ḥaḍramawt where I have often seen eggs lying broken outside rooms in which newly-born children lay. An opinion on the practice is cited. «If the ǧabīḥah is slaughtered at the feet of the bride and groom, is religious injunctions is known, for it is slaughtering out of fear of something other than God, such as the Ǧinn or the Šaiṭān. This arises from the belief that if the ǧabīḥah is not slaughtered, then a touching (mass) from the Ǧinn will befall them. Slaughtering at that time is therefore forbidden.»

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a gratuity (dihn, lit. oil, sesame-oil being intended [5]) for the carpenter (naǧǧār), and the architect mu'allim. In Tarīm I dealt with a carpenter called 'Awaḍ Bā Ḥaiwān of the Āl Bā Ḥaiwān all of whom were carpenters, apart from a few silversmiths. 'Awaḍ knew of eight ancestors who were carpenters. This gratuity (taǧrīb) *pourboire* or *douceur* is usually a riyāl or two [6]. One says for instance, Dī ḳahwah lak, 'this is a little present for you', or Bā A'ṭīk ḳahwah yābisah, 'I'm going to give you a little present of money'.

When the house is actually being built, the neighbours bring the ḥaddāmīn who are working on it a copper kettle (dallah [7]) full of coffee, as an ikrām lak, 'a kindness to you', as master of the house. In Tarīm being a neighbour implies unwritten duties rather more obligatory than such kindnesses as obtain between neighbours in Western Europe. Each time the coffee comes the workmen halloo (yiḥawwilūn), and sing formulae of the type quoted *supra*, and they cease working until they have finished the coffee [8]. The people of the Quarter [9] used to make a big copper ṭuss (derived from the Persian taśt) of ḳahwah, carried in a basket with two handles, for the builders, as a kindness to the owner of the house (ikrām li-ṣāḥib al-bait) at the Day of the Foundation (Nahār al-Sās). In return the master of the house would give them a little money present.

When the doors and windows of the house are completed, the carpenters get a meal (ġadā) or entertainment over and above their salary. At the completion of the building of the house, the mu'allim gets a customary present (luh 'ādah) which is called ḳuṣū'ah, and which is usually about ten riyāls. The term is applied to any such present given to terminate a job of work, or to terminate an engagement.

There is a law (ḳānūn) amongst the carpenters, (and one similar amongst the builders), that if you are tired of your carpenter, or

[5] In Aden bribery is euphemistically known as ḥaḳḳ al-salli, ḥaḳḳ al-ḳahwah.

[6] For the riyāl or Maria Theresa dollar, see R. Arnaiz, *Zur geographischen Verbreitung des Maria-Theresa Thalers*, *Mitt. der K. K. Geogr. Gesellschaft in Wien*, xvii (1874), p. 267-71.

[7] A small example of the South Arabian dallah, I brought back to the Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Cambridge.

[8] Ḥaḍrami coffee is made from the husk, a few berries, ginger and other spices.

[9] See my art'e in *Le Muséon* cited above.

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fall out with him, or find that he is not doing his work properly, you give him ḳuṣū'ah, and then dismiss him. Unless you do so, you will find that another carpenter will not come and work for you. If you tried to employ a different carpenter the latter would ask about the first carpenter and make sure that he obtained his ḳuṣū'ah before he left you. The Bā Sumbul (or Sumbil) who make stone querns, pestles, and work stone of all kinds, and the Baḳḳārah (cattlemen, ploughmen) will not allow you to change the particular member of their group who works for you at all. The only exception made is if you have had to dismiss the man you were employing, for laziness, incompetence, or disobedience; then you inform the next man you wish to employ of your reason for dismissing his predecessor. The new employee in turn ascertains from the man you have just dismissed that what you say is true, and if your case is just, he will come and work for you. This system is however confined to the two classes last mentioned only. The poet 'Askūl says : —

Wa'rdja' takhabbar 'ala 'l-waḳḳār
Li ḥāll mawḳaruh li-'l-abdjār
Bā Sumbil illi yabī' al-sufūn.

Come ask about the stone worker
Who to the stones bears his hammer
Ba Sumbil who sells column-drums.

This faḥidah of the Bā Sumbil has the monopoly in making stones for columns (safan), pestles (ḳuṣrah), etc. They live in the suburb known as 'Aidid. They do not allow any one else to carry on this work, and I am informed that they can even take people to court for infringing on their monopoly. The Baḳḳārah too have a similar monopoly in their profession.

As evidence of the power of the guilds of workmen in Tārim the following incident is relevant. Some time before the advent of the British to Ḥadramawt, the Sultans of Tarim, some of the wealthier saiyids, and others who were then constructing the large palaces for which it is famous, determined to lower the wages of the builders there. So they brought them together, and told them that they had resolved to make a reduction (nuḳṣān) in their wages. The builders refused. The Kathīrī Sultan however, consenting that

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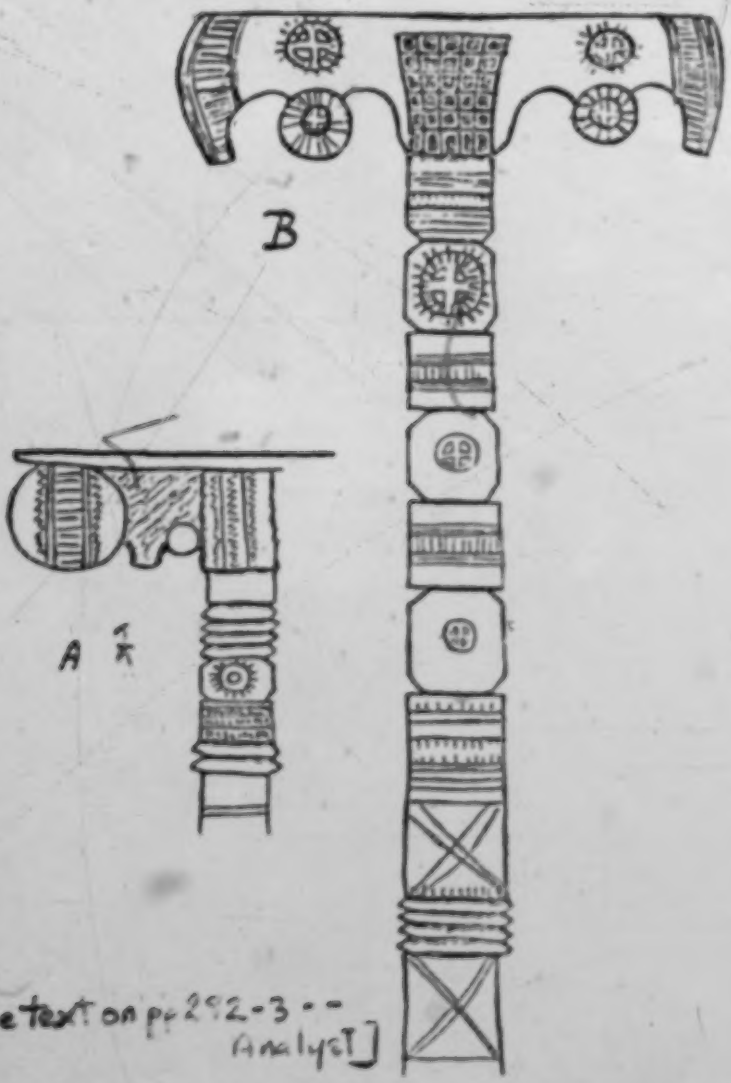

[See text on pp. 292-3 -- Analyst]

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this reduction should be made, issued a decree (taḳrīr) defining the wages of the various categories of people engaged in building. The workmen still refused to accept the revised wages, and some left Tarīm and went to the independent Ḥawṭah of Thibī, outside it and beyond Kaṯīrī jurisdiction. Some however stayed in Tarīm, but worked at collecting firewood, and refused to undertake building. A *modus vivendi* was established through the good offices of Saiyid Bū Bakr al-Kāf, but whereas, before, the wage of the builders had been two three Āl Kāf ḍarībahs per day, which the wealthy had attempted to reduce to one ḍarībah only, after the dispute all the workmen received three ḍarībahs[10].

To revert to the sacrifice on the sāḥ, I noticed in the fine archaeological site of the town known as Am-ʿĀdīyah[11] that on some buildings an inscription was located at the *corner* of the sāḥ which was constructed of the typical lozenge-backed Himyarite hewn stone, and that it stood about three *feet* from the ground. Possibly therefore it was sometimes a custom to place inscriptions in the sāḥ about the place of the sacrifice; they could not be placed higher as the wall above this point is of adobe. These particular Am-ʿĀdīyah inscriptions are very weather-beaten, and to the best of my knowledge no attempt has been made to copy them.

An interesting feature of Ḥaḍramī building is the shape of the columns, generally carved from ʿilb wood, which strikes one immediately as descended from an ancient tradition. In the Ḥawṭah of Thibī near Tarīm, I first saw the curious capital sketched (fig. C.) from below, with its little round pendants underneath the rectangular blocks. Later I realised that this was a very stylised type of capital, derived from a prototype somewhat resembling the examples in figs. A & B., sketched in my field-book at ʿAzzān and

[10] Reproductions of the ḍarībah in J. A. S. BUCKNILL, *A note on some coins struck for use in Tarim, Southern Arabia*, *Journ. of the Malay of the Royal Asiatic Society* (Singapore, 1935), III, 1. It is the coin which has the number 16 written on it. There were about five to six ḍarībahs to the riyāl (kirš frankwī).

[11] For notes on this town see S. PINCOWER, *'Im'adiya and Beihan, Aden, Antiquity* (London), xiii (1939), p. 50. The author confuses the name العادية with معادية, but it is really the South Arabian article Am = Al, followed by the word ʿĀdīyah. It is therefore « the ʿĀdite city » which means little more really than « the ancient city ». I visited it in 1941.

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Ṣa'id respectively, both in the Wāḥidī, Ḥimyar territory. The Ṣa'id house had in its clay construction that pattern of recessed surfaces one so often sees in fragments of pre-Islamic architectural ornament. Both of these columns are obviously representations of the palmtree, the capital representing the leaves on the outside, and the bunch of dates in its fibre bag (ḫubrah) on the inside. In all cases the capital which is carved out of a single block of wood, is called kabš or ram, a term which brings to mind the bull-headed columns of Persepolis. The room in which I saw fig. B. was the main reception room of the house called rakaiz (which Landberg gives as the general name for the second storey of a house), and the column was called rakīzah.

The following terms, most not mentioned by Landberg, may be of interest; the list makes no pretence at being near exhaustive, and these only apply to the Tarim area.

mawwar (pl. mawāwir), a little oriel window set high in the wall.

mizyāb (pl. mazāyīb), a hole in the wall at floor-level and the spout to which it leads, projecting outside for drainage (class.).

awdrī, pillars (class.).

asfan (pl. asfān & sufūn), a stone base under a wooden column, or round column-drums, roughly six inches in height.

aḫam (pl. aḫūm & iḫum), wooden column, (class.).

kabš (pl. kibāš), a horisontal piece of wood, about three feet in length, placed on the top of a column to serve as a capital, below the beam, (class.).

ḳāsim (pl. ḳawāsim), wooden beam lying on the top of the kabš (cf. Landberg).

širḳah (pl. širḳ), a beam running from wall to wall.

ḳabl (new plur. aḳbāl), Landberg's «solive».

'akf (pl. 'ukūf), arch (Landberg). Bait mu'akkaf, a house with an arched roof (i.e. holding up the first floor).

ṭāḳ, any arched hole in a wall used as a shelf, and an arch over a window with a wooden shelf in it.

'ammārīyah (pl. 'ammārīyāt), cupboard.

mirfa' (pl. marāfi'), shelf. Syn. riff (class.).

ḳawām (pl. ḳiwām), a wooden frame in which a door is set. In Tarim the sides of it are known as līnah.

ḳafā'ah (or ḳafā'at al-ṭāli'), the jamb over the top of the door.

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mardam (pl. marādim), Landberg's « seuil ».

darf, a door with one leaf.

masliʿ (pl. masālif), a door with one leaf, a small door in the outer wall of a court for the use of the women of the household.

warafatain, two halves of a door with two leaves.

sāfir (pl. sawāfir), horizontal wooden bars on a door, part of its construction (Landberg).

miḫaṭṭ al-dawār (pl. muḫaṭṭah), hinge of tinned iron, with a flange resembling scissors.

ḫuṭṭ (pl. ḫuṭūf), an ordinary hinge, not specially an architectural term.

madjarr, a chain or rope in an upper room, stretching down to the main door of the house. It can be opened by someone upstairs who is able to view the arrival from an upper window.

maḫbaḍ, a door handle.

sukkāṭah (pl. sakākiṭ), a bolt from a window-shutter into the base of the window-frame (clasp.).

zawḫ (pl. azwāḫ), decoration in embossed and painted plaster, or a line of plaster moulding. A synonym is said to be ʿaḫf (pl. ʿuḫūf).

ḫoil, a metal grille.

Landberg also gives a list of the names of the different storeys of a Ḥaḍramī house, but the Tarīmī names given below differ slightly.

murabbaʿah (pl. āt), a ground-floor room with two to six pillars.

maisamah (pl. mayāsim), a narrow ground-floor room with no pillars.

ġailah (pl. ġiyal), a room on the first storey (ḳaṣr), said to be a synonym of the more usual maḥdarah (pl. maḥādir). I knew the latter as a large reception room.

mirwāḥ (pl. marāwiḥ), a room on the second storey.

ġulb (pl. ġulūb), I have registered these as third storey rooms, but Landberg gives them as a belvedere on the roof.

ḏjanāḥ (pl. aḏjniḥah), a fourth storep room.

saṭḥ (pl. suṭūḥ), syn. raim (pl. ruyūm), a roof (Landberg).

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